

Sociological and psychological theories of crime



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In this task I am going to be looking at different theories which involve criminology, once I have completed that I am going to research one sociological and one psychological theory. At the same time I am going to look at the normal factors that might influence crime. I am also going to be looking at what criminology is and lots of different aspects of crime.

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Introduction

What is criminology?

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Criminology is a subject which has a lot of different aspects to it. There are a lot of different areas why people turn to committing crime. The reasons are:

- Sociology
- Psychology
- Biology
- Geography
- Law
- Anthropology

What is crime?

My definition of crime would be that it is something that someone has done wrong, which is breaking the law. So should be punished for it.

Another definition for crime would be crime is the breach of a rule or law for which some governing authority or force may ultimately prescribe a punishment.

Right or wrong?

We also had a class discussion about what is crime and what is right and wrong? The comments that came up are:

- An act that is punishable by law.
- Something that someone has done which is illegal.
- Behaviour which is contrary to the laws of society.

I think that a right reason for breaking the law if there was one would be if someone was so poor and they didn't have any money to get any food and they stole some food to keep them from starving to death. That isn't as bad
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as some crimes and they are only committing the crime so they can stay alive. A wrong reason for committing a crime would be if someone murdered someone else. That is a wrong crime because there will never be a good enough reason for killing someone.

Time and place

Laws are brought in everyday and different parts of the country and also world. Some examples of different times and place laws have come in are, in 1908 incest was not regarded as a criminal offence in the UK. Everyone knew that it was wrong and that you shouldn't do it but it wasn't until 1908 that a law was brought in to stop people who do commit the crime. Another example of this was that it wasn't illegal to rape within in marriage and that only changed in 1991, when it became illegal.

An example of places when it comes to laws is that some laws are different in some country than others. An example of this would be, in the Netherlands they are legally allowed to have sex at the age of 12, but in England they are only legally allowed to have sex when they are 16.

In a class discussion we had a look at what might be legal in five years and what is legal now but wouldn't be legal in five years. A few examples of thing that might not be legal in five years are:

- Drinking age might have gone up to age of 21.
- Driving age might go up so there are will be fewer accidents involving young drivers.
- Children allowed in pubs.

- Having a drinking whilst eating a meal with parents.

We also looked at laws that are illegal at the moment but they might be legal in five years. Examples of this would be:

- Smoking cannabis might be made legal for everyone not just people who need them for the medical reasons.
- They might have special licenses that mean people are allowed to smoke in pubs which have the license.

Explanation of why do people commit crime?

There are many reasons why people commit crime but they have been defined it into three categories. The three groups that they have been put into are biological or genetic, sociological and psychological.

Biological or genetic: this is theory that people who have committed have inherited it from their parents. So they are basically born as a criminal.

Sociological: this theory is that people will commit crime on depending on who they socialise with. They might do it because they are being pressured by the people they socialise with.

Psychological: this is theory s that people will commit crimes all depending on what their personality is like. If there have a good personality they are less likely to commit crime.

Biological Theories for Crime

Underlying which is also known as distal. Something that effect someone their whole life and it is being held deep down might cause them to commit crime. This might be how they were brought up when they were younger.

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Immediate this is also known as proximal. Is where the surrounding of a person include the people they will be hanging around with, might effect if someone commits crime or not.

Factors that might affect people to commit crime are:

- Cultural factors (learned social behaviour). This could be their family or even where they come from. It could relate their religion and what they are told they should and should not do.
- Power of peer group. This could be friends because they might feel pressured to commit crime because all of their mates are. They might want to fit in a group and to be in that group they may have to do something to show they are good enough.
- Media- the media can affect people in a lot of different ways. It can make people happy, sad or even angry. They have affect on people to do things might not normally do.

Statistics

Statistic is something where they will collect data and make averages and probabilities out of the results. One of many statistics is that men are twice more likely to commit a crime than women are. Another statistic is that 16 & 24 have the highest rate for crime in both sexes.

BIOLOGY – nature v nurture

Nature and nurture will come into to forms when it comes to crime. They have two different views on why people commit crime. The two different views are that people are born a criminal or they are made a criminal once they are born.

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Nature:

This is a theory where they believe that people are born the way they are and they don't develop into the way they are now. So when crime is involved they have the theory that they will be born as a criminal, and they don't develop it over time. It will come down to the genetic inheritance, if their parents are criminals they will become a criminal as well because of the genetic inheritance. They will say that genetic determination is inherited which includes the tendency to commit crime. Not many people still believe in this theory it came about in the early stages of the last century, when biologists like Darwin were about.

They did studies with twins, which are identical. This means that they are the same in everyway including the same genes. They studied both of the children to see if one of them or both of them become a criminal. They also looked if one did commit a crime the other one is more likely to commit a crime. This is known as concordance. This is more likely to happen with identical twins than just twins because identical twins have the same genes but twins only share half.

A study which supports this theory with evidence is Goldman and Cottelman (1995). They have evidence to support this theory because they showed that if one identical twin does one thing the other one is more likely to do it as well. But they also found that they are in the same environment so they have been brought up the same. Maybe if they were apart it might be different.

Nurture

- This is a theory where they don't believe it is anything to do with genetic inheritance. They think that everyone is born normal and that lived experiences affect if we will commit crime in are life time or not. Certain area's that might affect why people will commit crime are:
- Low family income-they might have any money so they have might have to resort to crime because they will want to buy things that everyone else have, like the latest toys and because they cant afford to pay for them they might steal the instead.
- Poor child-rearing techniques-if their parents don't bring their child up right they might know what is wrong and they might think that stealing is acceptable.
- Large families-that could many reasons like if they had a large family they might not have enough money to provide for them, or they might commit a crime because they don't get much attention so they do it to get attention, etc.
- Low educational achievement-that is because they will have no qualifications, so they will not be able to get a job so they won't have any money to pay for anything which might make them resort to crime.

My own view

My own view on the biology would be that I agree with the nurture theory because I don't think that people are born the way they are. I disagree with the nature theory because in some families the parents have never

committed a crime and they have a child and that commits crime. It shows that it is nothing to do with being born in a certain way. I think that people commit crime because of people who are around them who can influence them. I think it is all down to influences.

Sociological Theories of Crime

In this I am going to be looking at different theories. The theories that I am going to be looking at are:

- Functionalism
- Marxism
- Labelling Theory
- Chicago School

Functionalism

This is a theory which was developed from Emile Durkheim (1858-1917).

Emile Durkheim theory was all based his own theory that people want to be able to live and work, they need to have a strong sense of social order. This means that there has to rules and regulations, and there is always either a right or wrong answer. He thought they needed rules because people will abide by them, he thought that if there wasn't any rules or anything everything would break down.

Crime is universal and normal

Durkheim has come to the conclusion that crime is normal because it happens everywhere in every country, all over the globe. He thinks that it is normal because it has always happened and probably will always happen.

Crime is relative:

This is where the rate of crime is changing all the time. It will change because crime depends on certain factors. Factors that it depends on are things like time, culture, society, and etc. culture might affect the amount of crime because some cultures are more into crime than other cultures.

Crime is functional and necessary

Durkheim also thinks that crime is necessary in some ways because when people are committing crimes, the government are making new laws to try and punish people when they do commit that crime. This will show criminals that are thinking of committing a crime will not want to because they know what the punishment. It sets boundaries for people and if they commit crimes they will be punished. Functionalism and anomie:

This is where there is a major change in society. This will affect people in different ways it all depending on what changes. An example of this is depression, they will lower their sights and expectations but if there is a boom people will react completely different and they will set their sights higher. This will affect functionalism because it will affect the way people live and work. It will either make it better for them or worse.

My own view

When it comes to functionalism theory I think that some of the aspects of the theory are right but some aren't. I agree with the fact that we need rules and regulations to live are lives and that if there wasn't any, everything would break down. I also agree with bringing in laws to stop people from committing offences. I think that if someone has committed a crime that

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they should be punished for it. So that I agree with basically all of the aspects of the theory.

Merton's strain theory

This is another theory that Durkheim came up with. This theory is all to do with where they took the anomie theory further and developed it. This theory is all to do with anomie and how it encourages people to do better. It encourages for people to strive for wealth. The only thing that it won't be the same from person to person. It all depends on the person. Not everyone will strive to achieve the same thing. Durkheim came up with this theory in 1938. This theory breaks down into five sections. He talks about 5 different ways in which people are able to adapt to the change when the strive comes.

- Conformity- this is where they accept what they have been given and get on with it. An example of this would be in work, they have been given a task to do and they accept that they have to do it and just get on with it.
- Innovation- this is the opposite of ritualism. Innovation is where they will accept the cultural goals and they will stick to them but the way in which they achieve it like the traditional way, they will reject it and achieve them in their own way. They might resort to illegitimate ways or illegal ways.
- Ritualism- this is where they will reject the cultural goals that are there but they will accept and comply with the means of completing something. This would be the traditional ways of achieving things that they have to do. This would be known as bureaucrat. This is where

they will do the job to what it is worth they will not put any more effort than what is needed to complete the task.

- Retreatism- this is the less extreme form of rebellion. They will not accept the social goals, aims and method. They will not comply with them. They will be a drop out of society.
- Rebellion- this is where they will not accept any of the social goals, which means that they will go by their own rules and do what they want. They will do what they want, not what other people tell them to do. An example of this would be terrorists because that is going against the social goals and rules.

When it comes to relating this to crime. You can relate it because he came up with within the theory that people who are in lower classes are more likely to commit crimes because they have more of a strain than people in higher class. They also came up with a theory that working class is more likely to commit crime. The only thing that also he could not find out when it comes to crime is that is nothing to do with finance and people in classes. They can not explain why people are killed and assaulted when it isn't anything to do with money.

He also found out that not everyone has the same goals; it all depends on a lot of factors like living, finance, religion and many more. Merton could not explain why people will choose one adaption other another one.

My own view

I agree with the theory, the only thing that I don't agree with is that I don't think that people are split into some many groups. I think that there should

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only be three groups. The three groups that I think there should be are conformity, ritualism and also rebellion.

Marxism

This is a theory that Karl Marx came up with in (1818- 1883). This theory includes information about the new criminology, Critical criminology, Radical criminology, Left realism, Conflict theory.

His theory wasn't much to do with crime, it was more so to do with economics and ownership are the power influences in society. Examples of this that the more land you own the more powers you have. They will employ people to work on the land. Which also help with the theory that they will have more power than the people working on the land. The Bourgeoisie are the owners of the means of production.

The Proletariat are the working classes. He believes that there is always a conflict between classes which will lead to social change. It is basically a conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Bad behaviour was seen as things someone does that the people in power do not approve of. The people in power will bring in laws if they think that the people who are behaving in a bad way are at risk of taking over.

Crime comes from the unfairness and also the corrupt nature of the society. The way in which working people were treated. The reasons why working people committed crime was because they were fighting against the repression.

The bourgeoisie decided what should be laws and what shouldn't be. The proletariat listen and just thought they were normal. The reasons why the bourgeoisie brought in the laws was to make sure that the proletariat don't try and take over and take their place.

Crimes of the Bourgeoisie	Crimes of the Proletariat
tax fraud	benefit fraud
embezzlement	theft
pollution	assault
corporate crime	vandalism

This table shows the different types of crimes that both categories are most likely to commit. The bourgeoisie group are most likely to create pollution because if they own factories as their own business. They will have fumes

coming out and if there are too many they will be polluting the surrounding area and the earth.

The proletariat group are most likely to commit crimes like theft because they don't get paid much money for doing jobs for the bourgeoisie. This means that they may not be able to provide for their families properly which might force them to commit crimes. The two group's crimes are so different, the bourgeoisie will do because they know they can get away with it and save more money but the proletariat might do it so they can live properly and provide for their families.

Labelling Theory

This is a theory that a theorist called Becker came up with. His theory was completely different to the other theory because they blame crime on society where as in this theory it is all to do with people who label people. This is where people label an act as a criminal offence.

If people didn't label them people wouldn't think they were a criminal thing or a wrong thing to do. It won't be a crime till we say it is. In this theory they say that it is not the criminal who is responsible, it's the society. He pointed out that most people have committed a crime in their life at some time, big or small. Most people have been caught for doing it so they haven't been labelled. The only difference between people and criminals is that they have been caught for it and labelled as a criminal.

My own view

I agree with this in some ways but I don't agree in others. I agree that some crimes should be labelled because some people might look at it and think
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that it isn't a crime but it actually turns out to be. I don't think that some crimes don't need labelling because everyone morally knows what is right and what is wrong. So everyone knows that killing someone isn't right so I don't think crime with seriousness of that doesn't need labelling.

Chicago School

This is a theory that was made by the Chicago school developed. It all came about in the 1930's in America. It relates to Robert Park's theory where he talked about urban ecology. They looked at the people and what happen when there are ecological changes in the environment. This could result in people competing for space, invasion of territory and also dominance of other groups of people.

This pictures shows where crime is more likely to happen. It is based on a concentric zone theory where different zones and Burgess points out that more crime will be committed in ' the loop' and the zone ' in transition'.

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My own view

I agree with this theory in the fact that the area that people live can affect people to commit crime, but I think it is to focused around that one aspect why people commit crime. An example of this would be peer groups, family etc.

Psychology Theories of Crime

There are two different parts of psychological. The two different areas that I am going to be looking at are:

- Psychoanalytical theory
- Social learning theory

Psychoanalytical theory

Psychoanalytic theory which is also known as Freudian theory is where they think that people are being dominated by unconscious forces and driven by sexual and aggressive desires. The theory also says that we are not free and we aren't in charge of ourselves. So something else does everything for us.

Freud came up with three state of the mind:

- The id: the childlike demanding side of a person
- The ego: the rational logical side
- The super ego: the moral part of our personality

He came up with the theory that if parents do not socialise with their children enough, they will not be able to develop the super ego properly which might result in them not being able to control their ID. Which means that it can lead to bad and also destructive behaviour.

My own view

When it comes to this theory I don't agree with it in the sense that it is all to do with sexual and aggressive drives. I think it is just to do with thoughts not sexual or aggressive thoughts. I also disagree in some ways with if the parent don't show enough attention to their children they would stay in the <https://assignbuster.com/sociological-and-psychological-theories-of-crime/>

ID stage. I think that they might slightly be affected but not to the extent that he says it will be.

Social learning theory

This is all about behavioural psychology. Behavioural psychology is where they people learn behaviour and they are able to maintain it by rewards and also sanctions. When this comes to crimes, they say that crime has either been learned or it is a failure of socialisation process. This is where they were never taught what was right or wrong. They say crime is a learned behaviour, which doesn't differ from any other learning experience.

Criticism of the social learning theory

The criticism that was made was that people are very different and no-one is the same and that you don't know how someone will react to punishment. Someone might be happy but some people might not. All depends on the person. The theory assumes individuals are passive and unquestioning. It neglects the influence the influence of media and wider culture

Other contributing factors to crime

There are other factors that affect why people commit crime than the ones that I have covered. The other factors that might affect people are:

- Family- Farrington and West (1990) they found that a small amount of people will commit crime because of their family. They account for the large proportion of criminal activity. Families account for a small amount of it though. (UK most crime committed by 10% of the population).

- Economic factors- this shows that people from low economic are more likely to commit crime or involved in criminal activities. Benyan (1994) and Harrower (1998) looked into this theory and found that the nature been poverty and crime will never be a rock solid evidence to prove why people commit crime.
- Peer pressure- this is where friends and also peer groups influence people to commit crime. They might do it because they want to be in a group. Or they feel like an idiot if they don't do what everyone else is doing. This would normally happen in gangs.
- Education- a poor education can affect it because if they don't like it. They might not go which might turn them to committing crime because they have nothing else to do.

My own view

I think that these all contribute to crime in a major way. I think that normally most contributes to crime would be peer pressure because you will be with your friends and other peer so they affect a lot of different things you do and also how you live your life. I think that family is close behind because they will teach you what is right and wrong when you are younger so that you know for when you are older.